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BENNETT COSPONSORS LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE NATIONAL VOTING PROCEDURES

Bill establishes commission to modernize antiquated system

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Sen. Bob Bennett (R-Utah) today joined in introducing legislation which will reform the country's election procedures and provide grants to states and localities to improve their voting systems and election administration.

The Election Reform Act, sponsored by Sens. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Robert Torricelli (D-NJ), will establish the Election Administration Commission to study various aspects of election administration and make recommendations for improving and modernizing the voting systems in the country.

"The time has come for America's voting procedures to move into the 21st century," said Bennett. "The next time the country goes through a presidential election, Americans should feel confident that the citizens who vote do so in a secure, reliable and simple format. I hope the lessons we learned from Florida and the work of this new Commission will produce these needed results."

Following is an outline of The Election Reform Act cosponsored by Bennett:

1. Combines the Federal Election Commission's Office of Election Administration with the federal agency which administers ballots to Americans overseas to establish one permanent commission charged solely with electoral administration.
2. The Commission will consist of four Commissioners appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Commissioners will serve four year terms, with not more than two Commissioners affiliated with the same political party.
3. This Commission will study various aspects of election administration and make periodic recommendations for improving and modernizing voting procedures.
4. The Commission will not mandate federal standards for elections, mandate a

federal ballot or regulate how states and localities administer elections. It will merely provide states and localities with research advice on ways to enhance voting systems and methods.

5. The bill provides up to \$500 million for the first year and \$100 million for every year thereafter, in matching grants to states and localities seeking to improve their voting systems in a manner consistent with voluntary recommendations developed by the Commission.
6. The Commission will waive the matching grant requirement for communities whose average per capita income is among the lowest 1/4 in the state and during the first four years in which the Commission awards matching grants, 51 percent of the grants will be allocated to communities whose average per capita income is among the lowest 1/4 in the state.
7. The Commission will also recommend voluntary guidelines to increase accessibility to polling places as well as ways to improve voter registration, verification of registration and the maintenance and accuracy of voter rolls.
8. The bill also ensures that states adhere to existing federal guidelines to facilitate voting by men and women of the armed services stationed overseas.

The measure now goes to the Senate Rules Committee, chaired by Sen. McConnell, where it will be the subject of hearings.

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